Introduction

1 Introduction

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1.1 Classical Athenian politics as cultural memory and political resource in the Hellenistic world

In the city of Herakleia in South Italy, a certain Antileon fell in love with the striking young man Hipparinos. Hipparinos resisted his advances, setting him the apparently impossible task of stealing the bell or trumpet of the reigning, ferocious tyrant, which was under special guard. After Antileon managed this unlikely feat, by killing the guard, and won over Hipparinos, the tyrant himself began to covet the young man. Antileon responded by killing the tyrant, his rival, on the street, as he came out of his house. Antileon would have escaped capture, a heroic tyrannicide, except that he tripped over some bound sheep being led through the city. When the ancestral constitution of Herakleia was subsequently re-established, the citizens of Herakleia voted for honorific statues of the two lovers – as well as a ban on bringing flocks tied together into the city. This story is told by Parthenius of Nicaea, in his first-century BC *Erotika Pathemata*, a collection of arresting love stories with potential for development into poetry.[1] He ascribes the story to the early Hellenistic Peripatetic Phainias of Eresos. Phainias must have recorded his own version of the story of a tyrannicide through love in South Italy, which Aristotle had also mentioned, attributing it to Metapontum rather than Herakleia.[2]

[1] Parth. *Amat. Narr.* 7, with Lightfoot 1999 ad loc.

[2] Arist. *Eth. Eud.* 1229a20–4; compare Plut. *Amat*. 760b8–c5.

Both an early Hellenistic philosopher and a late Hellenistic poet thus recorded this story about the intersection of politics and love in a south Italian city, quite probably drawing on local traditions among Western Greek communities themselves, developed as aetiological justifications for aspects of local law and monuments. Even in fixing their attention on the local politics of this small city far from Athens, these different Hellenistic Greeks consciously or unconsciously evoked an Athenian template: the sixth-century Athenian lover-tyrannicides, Harmodios and Aristogeiton,[3] who were more explicitly commemorated in other public contexts in the Hellenistic Mediterranean beyond Athens.[4] This is emblematic of the way in which, whenever post-Classical Greeks addressed controversial and emotive issues of civic freedom, equality and fraternity, the stirring and paradigmatic political history of the Athenian democracy was never far from the surface – whether they welcomed it or not. That history was a central and influential aspect of Hellenistic cultural and political memory, which shaped contemporary political thinking and action.

On the other hand, the post-Classical Greeks were certainly not mere passive inheritors of Classical Athens' political legacy. There was wide scope for active shaping and adaptation of Athenian models: for example, this version of the story of the Italian tyrannicides gave the Athenian template distinctive colouring and twists, suitable to the new context. Nor was acceptance or admiration the only possible response to Classical Athenian political models. Indeed, the broader evidence for civic identity and ideals in the Hellenistic West reveals a determination to resist Athenocentrism: Diodorus Siculus, for example, partly drawing on his Sicilian predecessor Timaeus of Tauromenion, strives to develop a picture of Western Greek

[3] Compare Plut. *Amat*. 760b11–c2; Lightfoot 1999 ad Parth. *Amat. Narr.* 7.

[4] See Azoulay 2014: 179–86.

civic achievements, structures and ideals to compete with Athenian democratic ones, not least those of the Classical Syracusan democracy.[5]

A similar story can be told about the interlocking fate of the anti-democratic political thought and philosophy which was developed in Classical Athens, through a complex dialogue with democratic culture and ideals.[6] Hellenistic Greeks developed many innovative political ideas and theories, from the law-governed cosmopolis to new visions of the mixed constitution. Nonetheless, even for the most innovative, the landmarks of Classical Athenian anti-democratic political thinking remained unavoidable features of the landscape to be negotiated. Plato's political and philosophical approach, for example, could be treated principally as a foil to react against in political thought, as it was by many Stoics and Epicureans,[7] as well by Polybius.[8] However, it still demanded close engagement. Galen's *On Freedom from Grief*, recently discovered in a manuscript in a monastery in Thessaloniki, reveals the existence of a 'Plato of Panaetius', presumably a version of Plato's works annotated by the second-century BC Stoic Panaetius.[9] Panaetius was a dominant figure in later Hellenistic Stoic political thought, who developed a distinctive, Roman-inflected theory of civic duties, which offered a more contemporary alternative to the older republican theories of Plato and Aristotle;[10] but that

[5] See, for example, Holton, this volume. On Classical Syracusan democracy and the ancient debate about it, see Rutter 2000 and Robinson 2011: 67-92.

[6] Compare Ober 1998.

[7] See Long, this volume.

[8] See Champion and Gray, this volume.

[9] See Hatzimachali 2013: 8–10.

[10] See Cicero *De Officiis*, with Long 1995; Erskine 2011: 156; Brunt 2013: ch. 5.

distinctive political vision clearly emerged through rigorous, intensive, often critical engagement with his Classical Athenian forerunners.[11]

This volume examines in detail Hellenistic Greeks' varied, dynamic responses to, and adaptations of, the Classical Athenian political legacy. It brings together historical, philosophical and literary approaches to Hellenistic politics and political debate. This enables close attention to the wide range of media through which Hellenistic Greeks gained access to, and engaged with, Classical Athenian political history, institutions and ideals: for example, rhetoric and rhetorical education;[12] comic drama;[13] historiography;[14] philosophical treatises, commentaries and teaching;[15] and still vibrant civic institutions and epigraphy.[16] Physical monuments and city-planning were another important medium, not discussed in detail here. Consideration of different media shows that the Classical Athenian political legacy was partly transmitted quite deliberately by intellectuals and citizens, perhaps especially by teachers in civic gymnasia and the schools of Hellenistic metropoleis. However, the legacy was also transmitted through more complex processes of osmosis. Indeed, it was one of the important

[11] Philodemus also claims that Panaetius showed a special interest, of new intensity for a Stoic, in Plato and Aristotle: Phld. *Stoicorum Historia* col. 61 Dorandi; compare Cic. *Tusc*. 1.79. Other evidence confirms intensified interest in the texts and ideas of Plato and Aristotle in the later Hellenistic world: see Schofield (2013), xiv, introducing a recent volume on this topic.

[12] See Canevaro, this volume.

[13] See Konstan, this volume.

[14] See the chapters by Luraghi, Champion, Holton and Wiater.

[15] See Long, this volume.

[16] See Canevaro, Wallace, Gray and Ma, this volume.

strands which fed into the civic *koine* of the Hellenistic poleis, developed and refined through ongoing practical experimentation with civic institutions, practices and styles of rhetoric.

Attention to this wide range of media and processes involves studying together dimensions of Hellenistic political life often studied separately: on the one hand, the everyday civic life of the Hellenistic poleis, attested mainly in inscriptions; and, on the other, the political thought of Hellenistic intellectuals, especially philosophers and historians. Through this approach, this volume builds up a picture of a complex, multi-faceted Hellenistic public sphere of political debate, whose participants engaged with the equally complex and multi-faceted public sphere of Classical Athens. A central theme in both the Classical and Hellenistic public sphere was that of the merits and shortcomings of democracy itself: in each case, democratic and anti-democratic voices were in dialogue, together with advocates of some third way such as the mixed constitution. Hellenistic Greeks frequently drew on Classical debates as they preserved, adapted, blunted or overturned democratic institutions and practices, and as they re-imagined or criticised varying Classical Athenian ideals of civic freedom, equality and virtue.

The cultural authority of Classical Athenian literature and philosophy in the Hellenistic world added urgency to a central theme of these Hellenistic debates, which often emerges in this volume: the connection between politics, education and cultural flourishing.[17] Supporters of

[17] Pfeiffer 1968: 87-104 famously stressed the break between fourth-century Athenian culture and Alexandrian culture, but recent scholarship has stressed how extensive the contacts were, and how strong the 'Athenian' dimension of Hellenistic culture really was (e.g. Bruzzese 2011: 18-22; Benedetto 2011; and Konstan, chapter 6 in this volume). See, in general, on the

Athenian-style democracy could present Classical Athens as a coherent paradigm of political and cultural achievement, the basis for an integrated educational programme, with a prominent place for rhetoric. This left critics of Athenian-style democracy confronted with the challenge of somehow weakening or dissolving the link between Classical Athens' undoubted cultural and intellectual prowess, which they sought to harness, and its distinctive political culture of vigorous open debate and very wide political participation, about which they were sceptical.

These different approaches to the links between politics and culture shaped the emerging model of a truly 'Classical' Athens which was to play a dominant role in Greek culture in the Roman Empire, now very well and intensively studied by scholars.[18] Indeed, an important role of this volume is to bridge the gap between that tendency in Imperial Greek culture and the equally well-studied first stages in the development of a retrospective ideal of Classical Athens, which took place in Athens itself in the second half of the fourth century BC, partly under the influence of the orator and civic leader Lycurgus.[19] As has been pointed out in book reviews, recent volumes on the Greek East in the early Roman Empire offer excellent accounts of central aspects of Imperial Greek political thought and culture, from Classicism to cosmopolitanism,

centrality of Athenian culture in the formation of Hellenistic culture, alongside many other influences, Luraghi 2017 and the conclusion of chapter 2 in this volume.

[18] See recently, for example, Whitmarsh 2005 and Spawforth 2012, with much further bibliography; recent works build on the insights of (for example) Bowersock 1965 and Bowie 1970.

[19] See recently Hanink 2014, with further bibliography.

and their roots in Classical Athens, but mainly leave open for future study the complex processes of transmission and reinvention which took place in the intervening centuries.[20]

This volume attempts to contribute to filling in this part of the picture. Recent work has helped to clarify questions of Hellenistic Greek identity, ethnicity and culture, and their connections with Hellenistic conceptions of earlier Greek history.[21] This volume shifts the focus on to the question of how Hellenistic Greeks processed the distinctively political aspects of the Classical Athenian past, cultivating cultural memories and developing political resources on which Greeks of the Roman Empire were to rely. The inclusion of two papers on Plutarch[22] in a volume otherwise concerned with Hellenistic debates is geared towards this purpose: Plutarch drew on lost Hellenistic traditions of interpreting Classical Athenian politics, to which he gives revealing access, but he also reflected and promoted moves towards the new approaches to Classical Athens central to Imperial Greek political culture.[23] It is as a crucial pivot between Hellenistic and Imperial Greek politics and culture that he is included here.

In section 2 of this introduction, we summarise the papers in the two parts of the volume. In section 3 we pick out for discussion some common themes which unify the different chapters: debates about democracy and the role of elites in the polis; varieties of Athenocentrism, and

[20] See K. Vlassopoulos in *CR* 63.1 (2013), 184; cf. his comments in *Greece and Rome* 59.2 (2012), 261.

[21] See, for example, Schmitz and Wiater 2011.

[22] See the chapters by Erskine and Dubreuil.

[23] See the closing parts of Ma's chapter in this volume.

their critics; and the development of the anti-democratic tradition, and of alternatives to democracy, in Hellenistic political thought.

1.2 The Structure of the Volume

1.2.1 Part I: the Reception of Classical Athens in the Early Hellenistic World

Two powerful yet apparently contradictory phenomena characterised the early Hellenistic period, as Greeks came to terms with Alexander's conquests and their implications for civic life. On the one hand, as discussed by Ma (chapter 13), a combination of factors - a variety of royal political actors in the eastern Mediterranean who eliminated the possibility of one polis exercising hegemony over a large number of others, together with the disqualification of monarchical and oligarchical options – led to a 'Great Convergence'. By the early third century BC, a variety of manifestations of the city-state form converged towards a recognisable model of the autonomous and democratic polis – a widespread constitutional arrangement that involved the absence of censitary barriers to citizenship and to participation in decision making; rigorous democratic accountability of magistrates; and wide publicity for public decisions. The existence of a roughly uniform constitutional polis-scape reinforced the possibility of peer-polity interaction, and produced a distinctly polycentric world, where political change and innovation emerged from the interaction of a variety of loci, rather than (as, to a considerable extent, in the Classical period) from the hegemonic pull of particular centres. As a result, while the constitutional model towards which the early Hellenistic poleis converged has much in common with fourth-century Athenian democracy, this was not in any way a convergence

towards the Athenian model.[24] In fact, Athens, because of foreign interference and oligarchic experiments, was rather slow in fully joining the 'Great Convergence'.

This wide phenomenon of convergence, as it were, sidestepped Athens itself. Another contemporary phenomenon, however, cemented the place of Athens as a key cultural and political reference point in the very world that was finally freed of the reality or threat of Athenian hegemony. While it finally lost its political centrality after the Lamian War, Athens preserved its centrality as an intellectual centre for culture and political reflection far beyond this point. In Chapter 2 of this volume and in another recent contribution,[25] Luraghi has drawn attention to the fact that a variety of cultural forms that would come to characterise Hellenistic culture found their origin, to a considerable extent, in the 'thickly integrated social landscape' of Athens between the Lamian and the Chremonidean Wars, 'one in which politics and cultural spheres and activities such as philosophy, dramatic poetry, historiography, antiquarianism [were] ostensibly more tightly interconnected than ever before'.[26] At a time when the city was struggling to preserve its political system and its autonomy in the face of Macedonian expansion, the city was the epicentre of intense political and intellectual activity, characterised by features that were to become typical of what we now define as Hellenistic culture. From antiquarian interests such as inscriptions and chronology (typical of, for example, Timaeus and Philochorus), to New Comedy, literary criticism (practised by, for example, Douris and

[24] On the influence of the Athenian political system on early Hellenistic constitutional solutions, see Section 3a of this introduction.

[25] Luraghi 2017.

[26] Luraghi 2017: 000-00.

Demetrius of Phalerum), local history and philosophical engagement, early Hellenistic Athens is a microcosm of Hellenistic culture as a whole.

Citizens and intellectuals of early Hellenistic Athens thus developed rich cultural ideals, and idealising approaches to Classical Athens, extending and transforming similar tendencies of the preceding Lycurgan era. Their achievements then arguably became Hellenistic Athens' most valuable and influential export. Through education at Athens itself and across the Hellenistic world, Classical Athens seems to have become a leading focus of civic education, civic culture and civic discourse, as several of the papers in the volume show: rhetorical exercises, philosophical speculation and literary works in the Hellenistic world all took a generic or idealised Classical Athens, or a generic Classical polis much resembling Classical Athens, as their scene. As Konstan shows in chapter 6, theatrical performances also played an important role in sustaining Athens' reputation as an exceptional and leading polis.

The chapters in Part I explore particular case studies of early Hellenistic reception and interrogation of Classical Athens, against the background of the two concurrent tendencies we have outlined. In chapter 2, Luraghi develops his picture of early Hellenistic Athens as the originator of distinctive idealising approaches to Classical Athens that would become principal lenses through which Classical Athens was viewed, in the Hellenistic world and beyond. He analyses, in particular, how the Athenians of the period between the Lamian and the Chremonidean War looked at their identity and their past, and particularly at the fifth century BC, from the Persian Wars to the aftermath of the Peloponnesian War. Luraghi observes that the Persian Wars in this period were not used, as before, to underpin the Athenians' claims to hegemony, but rather to justify the city's struggle for freedom and autonomy – a representation that was appropriate not only for the new position of Athens, but more widely for a context in

which the impossibility of hegemony had opened new opportunities for autonomy for poleis across the Greek world.

If the case study explored by Luraghi is arguably a case in which the early Hellenistic Athenian point of view was to become a reference point, Wallace explores in chapter 3 a case-study in which we find no one-sided influence, but rather the interplay of different perspectives on Alexander's actions towards the Greek poleis, which highlight the polycentric nature of early Hellenistic approaches to the recent past. The different treatments to which cities from different parts of the Greek world were subjected by Alexander (and Philip) gave rise to a variety of different traditions concerning his actions. If the Athenians came to conceptualise their right to democracy in opposition to the interference of Alexander and the other Macedonian kings, for the Greeks of Asia Minor Alexander's actions were the foundation of their right to democracy, and an example to which they would go back for centuries in their dealings with Hellenistic kings. Elsewhere, Alexander's support of oligarchies across mainland Greece and the Peloponnese was to become less significant than the introduction of Macedonian-sanctioned autonomy against the hegemonic drives of Athens, Sparta and Thebes.

The case of the behaviour of the Peloponnesian leaders towards Philip and Alexander is also central to the discussion by Canevaro in Chapter 4. Despite the polycentric nature of the formation of Hellenistic traditions, by the second century BC Polybius (18.14) was forced to defend these Peloponnesian leaders against widespread representations of them as traitors. The popularity of these representations is due to the centrality that Athenian fourth-century oratory, and in particular the oratory of Demosthenes, acquired in education across the Greek world – Polybius' himself shows significant signs of Demosthenic influence in his writing. The evidence of Hellenistic declamations as well as of Hellenistic scholarship on the orators shows

that teachers and students in gymnasia across the Greek world engaged with these texts not only from a stylistic perspective, but primarily from the point of view of the democratic ideology and institutional environment they represented, which resonated with the reality of the vitality of the Hellenistic poleis. Side-by-side with the popularity of these texts, we find alternative traditions that challenge their worldview, in particular in the writings of the Peripatetics, and yet even these alternative traditions consist of engagement with Athenian political debates that have their origin partly in the world of early Hellenistic Athens investigated by Luraghi.

The last two chapters of Part I explore two different crucial forms of engagement with Classical Athenian political culture. Long in Chapter 5 shows that in debates about political philosophy, early Hellenistic philosophers often took as a principal point of reference, for development or deconstruction, the political philosophical debates of Classical Athens. The towering figures of fourth-century Athenian philosophy were ever present: for example, much Hellenistic political thought, starting with Zeno's *Republic*, responded to Plato's *Republic*. Nonetheless, as Long shows, Hellenistic philosophers also engaged with the thought and practices of a much wider range of Classical Athenian political thinkers, offering fine-grained responses to the Sophists and to Sophistic ideas and teaching methods. Konstan in chapter 6 makes the case that the spread of New Comedy in the Hellenistic period made a generically Athenian political, social and ideological setting – 'not necessarily the historical Athens at any given stage, but an idealized image of Athens that had wide appeal' – extremely familiar to Greeks across the world of the Greek poleis. This must have been a contributing factor to the 'Great Convergence' discussed by Ma.

1.2.2 Part II: Changing Approaches to Classical Athenian Democracy and Political Thought from Polybius to Plutarch

The second part of this volume focusses on developments in Greek approaches to the Classical Athenian political past in the period during which the Romans developed and entrenched their political authority over the Greek world. This period saw numerous changes in civic life and political thought which might, at first sight, appear to reduce the scope for intensive engagement with Classical Athenian politics and political philosophy. Those interested in promoting, or contesting, civic ideals now had to reckon not only with Roman power, but also with distinctive Roman approaches to politics, ethics and culture. Moreover, the spread of Roman power ran in parallel with other major changes in the politics of the Greek cities and in Greek philosophical life, which might also have been expected to push Classical Athenian political models to the margins. Civic elites gained new types of power, often outside the strict framework of institutions of democratic civic scrutiny, in many Greek poleis, which changed the dynamics of civic politics in the later Hellenistic world, to a degree which is still being debated.[27] At the same time, culture and *paideia* became ever more central to civic life, perhaps partly at the expense of warfare and traditional forms of political engagement. The decisive change in the practice of Greek philosophy came after Sulla's sack of Athens in 86 BC: after the dispersal of refugee Athenian philosophers around the Mediterranean, Greek philosophy became far more polycentric, with flourishing centres in Rhodes, Alexandria, Pergamon and Rome, not to mention the vast network of local teachers and travelling philosophers.

[27] See Gauthier 1985; Fröhlich and Müller 2005.

Despite first appearances, these changes could in fact serve to intensify engagement with Classical Athens, even if they also sometimes encouraged disengagement or focus on other models. Indeed, it was precisely in this period that members of the Greek philosophical diaspora, like many exiles excluded from their traditional heartland, displayed an intensified interest in the central figures and ideas of the world they had lost: in particular, the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, on whose works they began to write detailed commentaries, initiating a long tradition.[28] In the world of poleis and federal leagues, too, the various changes – subordination to Rome, changing power dynamics and new civic priorities – often provoked, rather than marginalising, debates about Classical Athenian politics and political thought. For example, new roles for civic elites, who were expected to make ever more substantial voluntary contributions to the welfare of the city, gave a new urgency to past Athenian debates about liturgies, honours and reciprocity, such as those found in Demosthenes *Against Leptines* (see below, section 1.3.1). They also intensified the importance of the ideal of the voluntarily supererogative, devoted citizen, who must be moulded through civic education (*paideia*), common to the political thought of Plato, Isocrates, Xenophon and Aristotle. Indeed, the great benefactors of the later Hellenistic world were perhaps not so sharply different from the leaders of the Classical Athenian democracy, in their complex relationship with their wealth and with the *demos*: scholars have perhaps been too quick to see the liturgy system as a sign mainly of democratic control of elites in the earlier period, but of elite dominance in the later period.[29]

[28] Cf. Schofield 2013: xiv.

[29] Compare Habicht 1995 for the similarities. Why should the model of Ober 1989, for example, not also be applicable to later Hellenistic civic life?

The chapters in Part II explore varied aspects of the developing Greek reception of Classical Athenian politics against this background. Craige B. Champion analyses in detail Polybius' critical approach to Classical Athenian democracy. This was related to Polybius' embrace of alternative political models, including a distinctive, Roman-influenced version of the mixed constitution, which retained democratic elements, but also gave considerable power to civic elites. Benjamin Gray places Polybius' hostility to Athenian democracy, and to other aspects of the Classical Athenian political legacy, in a broader discursive context. He argues that Polybius' arguments can be situated in a broader later Hellenistic debate about whether to preserve and revivify Classical Athenian democratic and philosophical ideals of civic equality and solidarity, or to supersede them in favour of alternative models of justice and stability. This ongoing debate can be reconstructed from historiography, epigraphy and philosophical fragments.

John Holton and Nicolas Wiater then each examine case-studies of the approaches to these problems of particular authors of the first century BC. Holton examines Diodorus Siculus' complex handling of questions of Athenian and Western Greek democracy in his account of the Sicilian expedition. Both the Athenian and the Syracusan democracies emerge as centres of debate about ethical values central to Diodorus' own political thought, especially 'humanity' (*philanthropia*). In turn, Diodorus himself uses the history of these democracies to examine, and reflect about, issues of ethics, culture and political decision-making, all central to his aspirations to educate his contemporary readers. Wiater shows that Dionysius of Halicarnassus shared some of Diodorus' tendency to use Classical Athens as an ideal context for interrogating *philanthropia* and *paideia*. Nonetheless, Dionysius also saw in Rome a possible political and cultural paradigm which could even eclipse Classical Athens. This was so even though both

the Romans and Dionysius himself had to remain constantly in dialogue with Classical Athens' legacy.

The following two papers examine Plutarch's approach to Athenian democracy, as both a summation of Hellenistic trends and a heralding of a distinctive Imperial Greek Classicism, which disparaged the democratic dimension of Classical Athenian flourishing. They both do so through the lens of Plutarch's biography of the later fourth century Athenian leader Phocion. Andrew Erskine places the *Life of Phocion* in the broader context of Plutarch's critical approach to Athenian democracy, directed more at the unpredictability of the *demos* than at democratic institutional structures. This went hand in hand with Plutarch's admiration for Classical Athenian models of the integrity of the intellectual or philosophical life, partly illustrated by Phocion himself. Erskine also shows the close links with political issues of Plutarch's own day, such as city relations with superior powers and the connection between politics and *paideia*. After Erskine establishes the broader context, Raphaëla Dubreuil focusses on the specific example of Plutarch's use of theatrical imagery and concepts to study the decline of Athenian democracy in the *Life of Phocion*. This example illustrates Plutarch's keen interest in understanding the dynamics of democratic politics and oratory, but also his close and imaginative engagement with the Athenian anti-democratic tradition itself, especially the Platonic tradition, which had been sustained through the Hellenistic period (see, for example, Champion's chapter here).

John Ma's concluding chapter draws together the two parts of the volume, as well as looking forward to the Roman Empire and beyond. He begins by arguing for the idea of a 'Great Convergence' in Greek cities' institutions and civic life in the early Hellenistic period, around a consensual model of participatory government and inter-polis interaction (compare section

1.2.1 above). He concludes by analysing the changes which occurred in the later Hellenistic and early Imperial period, sketching the background to the topics addressed elsewhere in Part II. Ma sees a gradual shifting away from the polycentric pluralism of the early Hellenistic period, in which Athens and Athenian influences were part of a complex, varied political landscape. Hellenistic civic life and Hellenistic creative appropriations of Classical Athenian politics were increasingly, though not universally, forgotten or obscured, in favour of a nostalgic image of Classical Athens as the ideal polis, distinguished more by its culture and power than by its democratic politics. This shift, and its long-lasting impact, has contributed to diverting attention from the complex Hellenistic processes and debates which this volume seeks to bring back into focus.

1.3 Common Themes and Questions Raised by the Papers

1.3.1 Political institutions, Hellenistic Democracy and the Elites

The spread of a recognisably coherent democratic constitutional model in the early Hellenistic period cannot help but invite comparisons between the institutional features that are characteristic of the 'Great Convergence' and the political institutions of Classical Athenian democracy. Such comparisons give rise to fundamental questions. One question is one of descent: is there a direct line of descent between Classical Athenian democracy and the generalised Hellenistic democratic *koine*? Another question has to do with evaluation: when assessing the democratic credentials of Hellenistic *demokratiai*, should Classical Athenian democracy be considered the paradigmatic, normative example?

These questions are appearing again and again in current research. To give only two examples, what should we make of Domingo Gygax' confident statement, at the end of his extensive investigation into 'the origins of euergetism', that 'civic euergetism was invented by Athenian democracy'?[30] And, if Domingo Gygax is correct, how should we imagine that line of descent working in practice? A different yet connected issue that has taken centre stage in recent work on the Hellenistic polis is that of the social and political character of the Hellenistic democratic polis: were the Hellenistic poleis actual democracies, as they called themselves? Or were they democracies only in name, in fact dominated by social elites that controlled all political institutions?[31] Recent studies have tried to find an answer to this question, and the two most recent monographs on the topic, by Susanne Carlsson and Volker Grieb, use opposing criteria to define whether relevant Hellenistic poleis' political systems were in fact democracies. Carlsson uses abstract definitions taken from modern political theorists, while Grieb and others use Classical Athenian democracy as the paradigm by which to measure Hellenistic democracies.[32]

In order for historians to make inroads into these problems, institutional comparison is not enough in itself. As argued by Ma in chapter 13, there are institutions that are typical of the Hellenistic democratic *koine* that are unparalleled in Athens and *vice versa*. Ma mentions *prographe* and *prosodos* (i.e. the power of initiative by bodies or individuals in the polis),

[30] Domingo Gygax 2016: 254 and *passim*. Cf. also: 'it is ironic that the polis that was perhaps the least keen on civic euergetism developed it'.

[31] This is the line advocated e.g. by Quass 1992 and 1993; Chaniotis 2010.

[32] Carlsson 2010; Grieb 2008. Cf. Hamon 2009 for an in-depth assessment of these works. Mann 2012 defends Grieb's approach.

which are widespread in the Hellenistic poleis but unparalleled in Athens. Conversely, amendments from the floor, common in Athens, are absent from the record for the Hellenistic poleis.[33] To these examples, one may add the important distinction between public and private charges in the courts, which is unattested outside Athens.[34] Similarly, although variants of a distinction between *nomoi* and *psephismata* are found in a number of Hellenistic poleis, the distinction is never identical to the Athenian one, and the relevant procedures, inasmuch as we can reconstruct them, never reproduce fourth-century Athenian *nomothesia*. Moreover, their attestations start at the time when the Athenian procedures were actually discontinued.[35] These examples alone should warn historians against postulating simple lines of direct descent from Athenian democracy to the Hellenistic democratic *koine*. On the other hand, there are several cases in which Classical Athens clearly pioneers institutional practices that later become typical of the Hellenistic democratic *koine*, and these cases – from pay for judges and assembly-goers, to a variety of measures of financial administration, public accountability for magistrates, anti-tyranny measures, public epigraphy and, indeed, civic euergetism – cannot be dismissed. A significant level of influence is undeniable.[36]

This volume helps to put these institutional similarities and differences in a broader context, by shedding light on the specific processes through which Athenian models contributed to

[33] See Ma, chapter 13, pp. 000-00.

[34] See Cassayre 2010: 316; Canevaro 2014: 355-6.

[35] For an overall account of the development of Athenian *nomothesia* see Canevaro 2015; Canevaro 2016b analyses similar procedures outside Athens.

[36] See Ma, chapter 13, pp. 000-00 for these examples, and Domingo-Gygax 2016 for civic euergetism.

Hellenistic political reflection and experimentation. Several chapters show us Hellenistic Greeks thinking and writing about issues that were central to the experience of the Hellenistic poleis through engagement with Athenian texts and the Athenian past. For example, Canevaro (chapter 3) draws attention to the remarkable level of engagement with Athenian political oratory and institutions shown by a Hellenistic rhetorical exercise. This exercise is a response to Demosthenes' *Against Leptines*, which concentrates on the relation between the city and its wealthy benefactors, explores various available policies for the liturgical taxation of the wealthy, and (against Demosthenes) downplays the reliance of the city on benefactors and plays up the duties of the benefactors towards the community. The implications of civic euergetism for the democratic equality of the community are the key theme of this exercise, and they are explored through engagement with an Athenian text which provides the most extensive extant exploration of these themes in ancient Greek literature.[37] This rhetorical exercise is not in any way untypical: the *Against Leptines* was in fact, throughout the Hellenistic period and beyond, one of the most popular of Demosthenes' speeches. In the first century AD Aelius Teon ranks it among the five best Demosthenic speeches (*Progymnasmata* 61.15). It is a clear favourite in the early Hellenistic treatise *On Style* by Ps.-Demetrius (10-11, 20, 245-6), and is praised by Cicero (*De Oratore* 11) and by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ad Amm.* 1.4), who considers it 'the most charming and vivid' of Demosthenes' speeches.[38]

Seeing the engagement of rhetors and critics with this text within the context of the challenges civic euergetism posed to egalitarian ideals in Hellenistic democracy not only allows us to appreciate the reasons for its success, but also shows us that Classical Athenian democracy, for

[37] See Canevaro 2016a: 77-97.

[38] See Kremmydas 2012: 62-4.

Hellenistic Greeks, was good to think with. Indeed, engagement with Classical Athens helped the successive generations of Hellenistic and early Imperial Greeks studied in this volume to investigate, from their different perspectives, the central and enduring issue of the relationship between a city's *demos* and its elites (see, for example, chapters 11 and 12 on Plutarch). The inscriptional record of the institutions and ideologies of the Hellenistic poleis can thus be greatly enriched through attention to the wider cultural context – what Hellenistic Greeks learned, read and discussed.

1.3.2 Athenocentrism as a Focus of Hellenistic and Modern Debates

The previous section makes clear that this volume is intended as a contribution to a lively debate about the central issue of Athenocentrism in Hellenistic history. This debate has taken stimulating turns in recent scholarship: for example, studies stressing the Classical Athenian influence on such symbols of Hellenistic civic vitality as organised ephebic education and anti-tyranny legislation have stimulated critique and reflection concerning the issue of Athenocentrism.[39] This volume contains within its own chapters contrasting approaches to this central issue, for example in the opening and closing chapters of Luraghi and Ma respectively.

But the volume also shows something else: debates and disagreements about Athenocentrism, and its advantages and problems as a political ideal and interpretive tool, were already in full swing in the Hellenistic world itself. For all that many Hellenistic Greeks consciously looked to Classical Athens for political and cultural inspiration, there is also strong evidence in this

[39] See Chankowski 2010, with R. van Bremen's comments in *JHS* 135 (2015), 234–5; and responses to Teegarden 2014.

volume for the opposite phenomenon: conscious rejection or questioning of Athenocentrism, in favour of a more pluralist or non-Athenian vision of the Greek world. Wallace, for example, shows in chapter 3 how the cities of Asia Minor nourished their own ideals and traditions of democracy and autonomy, consciously distancing themselves from the democratic Athens which had once been their political overlord. Similarly, Champion and Canevaro show that Polybius insisted on the distinctiveness, and distinctive value, of Peloponnesian political traditions; these included federalism and a co-operative diplomatic style, based on careful, rule-governed negotiation with superior powers, from Macedonians to Romans, which stood in contrast with Demosthenic ideals of autonomy and defiance. Polybius also held up Rome and the West as an alternative source of political models, and focus for political analysis, in some ways superior to Athens (compare the opening to 1.1 above). In this his approach was partly picked up by Diodorus Siculus and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, discussed by Holton and Wiater. Even in Hellenistic Athens itself, nostalgic longing for past Classical glories was certainly not the only available cultural option. Rather, the expansion of the Greek world introduced many new possibilities: as Paraskevi Martzavou has shown, for example, the originally Egyptian cult of Isis was a thriving and prominent part of the cultural life, but also the power politics, of later Hellenistic Athens.[40]

We hope that the different positions and evidence presented in this volume will stimulate further debate on this issue. Any new synthesis will have to do justice to a nuanced, mixed picture. New centres of culture and politics developed distinctive identities and perspectives in the Hellenistic period – but they often did so through dialogue with Classical Athens. The city of Rhodes, for example, was certainly a new and innovative political and cultural centre in the

[40] Martzavou 2014.

Hellenistic world: it developed its own form of mixed constitution, certainly not a straightforward democracy,[41] and became a new centre of rhetorical and philosophical education, the base of innovative Stoic teachers (Panaetius, Posidonius) in the later Hellenistic world. Nonetheless, we know that Athenian literature and philosophy was a staple of education in Hellenistic Rhodes. A Rhodian inscription contains a list of books held by the library (probably) of the local gymnasium:[42] young Rhodians, in the second century BC, were reading and studying texts such as Demetrius of Phalerum's *On Law-Making at Athens* (Περὶ τῆς Ἀθήνησι νομοθεσίας) and *On Constitutions at Athens* (Περὶ τῶν Ἀθήνησι πολιτειῶν), Hegesias of Magnesia's *Athenophiles*, *Aspasia* and *Alcibiades* (Οἱ Φιλαθηναῖοι, Ἀσπασία and Ἀλκιβιάδης), and several speeches by Theopompus including a *Panathenaicus*. Traditions were also developing about the exile of Aeschines on Rhodes,[43] which would have offered an excellent aetiology for Rhodes' new role as a centre of rhetorical education, well-suited to continuing and revising Athenian traditions.

To concentrate only on long-established poleis such as Rhodes would obviously be to underestimate the extent of innovation and experimentation in forms of community and interaction in the Hellenistic world, often sharply divergent from Classical Athenian precedents: it is necessary also to take into account, for example, new forms of federalism,

[41] Cf. Strabo 14.2.5.

[42] Maiuri *Nuova Silloge*, no 11. Cf. Canevaro, chapter 3, pp. 000-00 n. 66 and Ma, chapter 13, pp. 000-00 n. 40.

[43] These are reflected in the letters of Ps.-Aeschines, probably written some time in the early Roman Empire; these are the subject of an ongoing Edinburgh PhD thesis by Guo Zilong, which will offer edition, translation and commentary.

cross-polis collaboration and festival communities, and new types of local or travelling association, such as the associations of Dionysiac artists. Nonetheless, even the most innovative and polycentric Hellenistic communities also often relied on an ideal of Classical Athens in order to articulate their aspirations and identities. This is clear from a decree of the Delphic Amphiktyony (c. 120–115 BC) responding to an embassy from the association of artists of Dionysus based at Athens. The Dionysiac artists had sent as envoys a priest of Dionysus and tragic poet, together with two epic poets, in order to ask the Amphitkyons to uphold their honours and privileges.

This is clearly a distinctively Hellenistic context of interaction between fluid, cosmopolitan, predominantly cultural-religious communities, which adapted for their own purposes traditions of civic decision-making, diplomacy, honours and epigraphy. Nonetheless, precisely this characteristically Hellenistic decree contains fulsome praise from the Amphitkyons for Athens – specifically, the *demos* of the Athenians – as the origin and centre of human civilisation. Significantly, the representation of Athens' achievements here was tailored, not only to recalling the past glories of imperial Athens by evoking the tradition of Thucydides and Isocrates,[44] but also to expressing these groups' specific concerns: the focus is the Athenian *demos*' role in introducing education, religion and literature, under the guidance of ideals of civility, trust and humanity.[45] As these examples show, Classical Athenian influence and Hellenistic polycentrism went hand in hand in different contexts, through complex interactions which invite further study.

[44] Cf. Le Guen (2001), vol. I, 97–8; vol. II, 6–7.

[45] *CID* 4.117, ll. 11–22; see also Le Guen (2001), vol. I, text 11.

1.3.3 Political Thought, the Anti-Democratic Tradition and Alternatives to Democracy

This volume is also intended to contribute to another ongoing development in the study of the Hellenistic world: at the same time as historians have come to lay more stress on the vitality of the Hellenistic polis, scholars of Hellenistic philosophy and thought have brought into greater focus the often underestimated vibrancy and range of Hellenistic political thought, including reflection about citizenship.[46] This volume contributes to this tendency by studying the detailed and argumentative engagement of many Hellenistic Greeks with Classical Athenian political reflection. This is partly a question of studying the full range of Hellenistic philosophical enquiry: as Long shows in his chapter, even Stoics and Epicureans, often thought to be keen to transcend the polis, were very consistent and rigorous in their engagement with Classical Athenian civic life and thought. This dimension of the volume is also built on a very broad conception of Hellenistic, and Classical, political thought: reflections about politics ranging from philosophy, through historiography, to the everyday political rhetoric of speeches and inscribed decrees.

As has already emerged in this introduction, the chapters in this volume show that Hellenistic Greeks kept alive, and adapted, the Classical Athenian anti-democratic and extra-democratic traditions in political thought. This was not only a question of the perpetuation of aristocratic and philosophical arguments against the rule of the *demos* – conceived as unsteady and

[46] See, for example, Laks and Schofield 1995.

capricious – well-attested in this volume in the thought of Polybius, Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Plutarch. It was also a question of imaginative reworkings of Classical Greek political theories, arguments and utopias. For example, reworkings and extensions of the Sophistic and Peripatetic traditions of linking education with politics, for the sake of improving both, are prominent in the chapters by Long and Gray. Several chapters also engage with Hellenistic writers' grappling with the possibility of an alternative republican political system to democracy, marked by greater wisdom, justice and stability – something they usually thought could best be achieved through a form of mixed constitution, perhaps best realised in practice by the Romans. Such ideas stood in a tradition which linked Hellenistic thinkers, not only with Plato and Aristotle, but also with (for example) Thucydides and Xenophon. The ambivalent desire to preserve something of the strengths of democracy and the rule of law, while taming the *demos*, also aligned relevant Hellenistic thinkers with engaged internal critics of the Athenian democracy such as Isocrates.

Relevant Hellenistic political thinkers and teachers were also the conduit through which Classical Athenian political and ethical ideas were passed on, not only to Imperial Greek, but also to Roman political thought. Indeed, the Hellenistic political debates reconstructed in this volume, including the development of anti-democratic arguments and the fashioning of republican, mixed alternatives, provide an excellent discursive context for the political and ethical philosophy of Cicero, especially his *De Re Publica*. Cicero himself, for example in the opening to Book V of his *De Finibus*, gives a vivid picture of Hellenistic Athens partly as a philosophical and political museum, but also as a centre of ongoing, dynamic teaching and reflection: the interlocutors in that dialogue have to stroll to the Academy in the heat of the afternoon in order to have it to themselves, even at this dramatic date, not long after Sulla's sack of Athens. They look for inspiration in their debates about the highest good, not only to

Plato and Aristotle themselves, but also to Hellenistic Academics and Peripatetics, such as Carneades and Critolaus, whose inspiring presence they feel looming in this place along with that of the fourth century founders.[47]

A significant consequence of this analysis is that even the most doctrinaire aristocratic thinkers of the Hellenistic or Roman world had to take into account that Classical Athens' achievements were those of a democratic polis, whose constitution enabled even the poorest citizens to participate fully in politics. This unavoidable fact must have helped to sharpen the political thought of post-Classical intellectuals: there was no space for blankly denying the plausibility or efficiency of democracy, rather than arguing against it as a viable option trumped by a better alternative, which had to be defined and defended. As a result, we hope that this volume will offer much to those interested in ancient political thought, as well as ancient politics: its story is one of Hellenistic engagement with Classical Athenian political discourse as a whole, constituted by tensions between democrats and anti-democrats.

[47] Cic. *Fin*. 5.1–3.